

Although our big newspapers report only on occasion about efforts aimed at rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, those efforts are more intensely planned than one may suspect.

In none of those reports does one find even a vague allusion to a monumental failure of a major effort, initiated by none other than Julian the Apostate in January 363.

The enterprise, which energized Jewish enthusiasm, had to be aborted no sooner than it had begun. The reason was a series of truly miraculous events: earthquake, violent winds, eruption of fire from the ground, and the spectacular appearance of a cross in the sky.

Most educated Catholics do not seem to be aware of all this. Yet the historical evidence is beyond any dispute. The documents are presented here concisely and meticulously by a Catholic scholar, internationally known for his books on the relation of science and faith.

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# To Rebuild Or Not To Try?

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### *To Rebuild?*

If one were to observe the sabbath rest by refraining from any gainful occupation, the perusal of any Sunday issue of *The New York Times* would easily do. It is almost a day's work to plough through three pounds of newsprint, even when one discards right away about a third of it. Nor is it easy to work out of one's bloodstream in a day the indignation which anyone, still mindful of decency, may feel on being exposed to the defiantly immoral and amoral tone of the *Magazine* section which that undeservedly illustrious daily offers each Sunday. It is well nigh impossible to avoid the conclusion that the purpose of that offering is to desecrate the day of the Lord and, in general, to despoil one of seeing the truthful state of matters in almost all things that really matter.

One, of course, must be able to read between the lines to see what is intellectually dishonest in the October 3, 1999 issue that carried in flaming red letters on its cover the words: "Jerusalem Endgames," together with the explanation in white letters that make any text stand out deservedly or not: "When peace talks meet the millennium, the dangers can be of biblical proportions." The cover shows an ultraorthodox Jew, standing on a housetop, with the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock rising behind him. His face and outstretched arms clearly convey an impatient desperation. In another picture he stands on the Mount of Olives, with a large prayer shawl over his head and shoulders as he gazes toward the spot where once the Temple stood.

The man's name is Yehuda Etzion, whom the reporter identifies as "the leader of the Israeli underground in the West Bank 15 years ago," who, together with his followers, "made violent mayhem, planting bombs under the cars of Arab mayors, and attacking innocent Palestinians on the streets. He also plotted to blow up the Dome of the Rock, an attack that, had it been carried through, would have brought cataclysm to Israel."

It is of some, though hardly sufficient, comfort to learn that Mr. Etzion had spent 6 of his last 15 years in jail. It may not be very undemocratic to think that those who pose permanent threat to the very survival of a democratic State, to say nothing of innocent people, should be kept permanently under lock. But would there be enough prison cells in Israel to contain all such firebrands? At any rate, Mr. Etzion is moving around freely, talking with no inhibition about his fondest plan, and to a reporter from a major Western newspaper. Strangely, the remarks of Jeffrey Goldberg, the reporter, do not suggest that he really cares for the safety of the Dome of the Rock. Worse, Mr. Etzion finds fault with his plan to blow up the Dome only insofar as the act is in the wrong place in a temporal sequence: "First we should have made the [entire] Jewish people want to meet God. Most of them don't want to yet. Only when this happens can we remove the Dome." The reporter should have perhaps added that a very large portion of Jews just do not want to meet God, whether in Israel or elsewhere.

As one practiced in placing bombs under cars, Mr. Etzion could have only armed attack in mind as he continued: "There are things that people have to do by force. We cannot sit and read books and hope the Temple is rebuilt. We have to rebuild it ourselves. . . . Belief without action is meaningless."

The presence of such religious fanatics near the flashpoint of history causes, of course, plenty of concern to those in charge of Israeli security. In the same article the former chief of Shabak, Israel's general security service, is quoted: "Every day in Jerusalem that ends peacefully is a miracle. I am afraid of what could happen on the Temple Mount."

The concern is very much alive in any sane Jew, however far away from that flashpoint, who in fact considers the disappearance of the Temple as a blessing in disguise for the Jews. Thus, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of the Conservative Movement's Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, was quoted in that article as having asserted that what made "Judaism portable and invulnerable" was precisely the replacement of the Temple and its ceremonies with mere verbal prayers. It is, of course, another matter to ignore as he does the words addressed to the Samaritan woman: "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship neither on this mountain [of Gerizim] nor in Jerusalem . . . . God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth" (Jn 4:21 and 24). Coming as they do from a work, the Gospels, far more often copied and printed than any other work, these words belong to general intellectual patrimony. To ignore them is patently disingenuous in contexts about worship confined to mere verbal utterances.

Those words of Jesus were uttered well over thirty years before Judaism was made "portable and invulnerable" by being inflicted a gigantic wound: the Temple was obliterated and those who worshiped there were banned from even the ruins of Jerusalem as well as from its environs. It is just simply not true what Rabbi Schorsch suggests in the same breath that Christians (and Muslims) learned from the Jews the purely "verbal" form of worshiping God. Christianity had already spread all across the Mediterranean, when the Rabbinates gathered in Jamne to figure out the status of a Judaism without a Temple and all its sacrifices which in a typical Passover implied the slaughtering of a million lambs or more and the burning of their choicest parts on the altar of holocausts. Those were not yet the time to worry about breathable air.

But one can agree with Rabbi Schorsch about the enormous lure which formal, that is, fully political Jewish presence around the Temple Mount nowadays presents for a huge miscalculation: "The Temple is within human reach. That is the danger. They're almost there. They can feel it. They are standing at the foot of the Mount. If you believe that God isn't going to abandon you, then

you are not intimidated by a billion Muslims." Certainly, those who in A. D. 70 fought Titus' soldiers to the bitter end were propelled by that very same belief, with incredibly fateful consequences for Jews.

The "they" are far more numerous than is the number of plain anarchists. They include the great many who not only dream about the restoration of the Temple, but make all sorts of research on the Temple as it stood in Herod's time and on its ceremonies. They do so not simply to satisfy some archeological urge but to make ready for the moment when actual reconstruction can start. Jews of possible Levitical ancestry are being searched out and the texture of the garments to be eventually worn by them is being carefully established. They are to be faithful replicas of the priestly garments described in Exodus (ch. 39) and vividly portrayed in Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, this breathtaking and heart-rending account of epic proportion of how and why Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed.

One wonders whether Israel's Ministry of Religious Affairs, where ultraorthodox Jews have some say, merely promoted a purely cultural agenda as it sponsored in 1989 a Conference on Temple Research, the first ever such conference. Its ostensible purpose was to address the question of whether contemporary Jews are under obligation to rebuild the Temple, a point on which the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmud give conflicting advice. Or perhaps the Ministry was acting under the direction of Shabakh which obviously wanted to have as complete a list as possible of those who think about rebuilding the Temple in concrete terms and may promote, however unwittingly, an armed seizure of the Temple Mount. Or was even the Shabakh conniving with the plan while pretending otherwise? What transpires week after week even in the pages of *The New York Times* about the duplicity of some Israeli politicians concerning democratic rights for any and all, makes one wonder about many other matters as well.

By 1989 the Temple Institute had already spent six years in reconstructing 38 of the ritual implements required for properly performing the Temple sacrifices. In 1989, 65 more such imple-

ments were still to be realized, partly because of lack of funds. Obviously it will be no small effort (and enormous cost) to cast surreptitiously that huge bronze bowl (the sea) that would stand in front of the altar of sacrifice. It would, of course, be no problem to weave in secrecy the fabric "made of flax spun by hand into six-stranded threads," or the material of priestly garments. This particular detail occurred in a two-page report in TIME (Oct. 16, 1989), where the chief eye-catcher was a picture of a small-scale model of the Temple as rebuilt by Herod.

The same report contained the information that near the Wailing Wall two rabbis give systematic instructions to 200 students about Temple services and that appeal had been issued to Jews who believe themselves to have descended from Levites, to come forward for genealogical and genetic testing. Provisions had already been made at that time to obtain ritually appropriate heifers whose ashes are required for the purification of the priests' clothes. A special cattle ranch in Israel produced such heifers by implanting in Israeli cows heifer embryos imported from abroad.

Those who think that all such efforts are a mere academic pastime, should recall Rabbi Schorsch's worries quoted above, but especially the words of Zev Golan, director of the Temple Institute: "Our task is to advance the cause of the Temple and to prepare for its establishment, not just talk about it." As always in history, but especially in its modern phase which allows a very effective spread of ideas, actions usually follow thought. Thinking hard and long about the Temple will inevitably breed concrete efforts to start with its rebuilding at whatever cost.

It may be a safe bet that in the papers given at the Conference there was hardly a word about an ominous fact, which took place in January 363. It was then that, at the urging of Emperor Julian the Apostate, Jews in Jerusalem and elsewhere enthusiastically joined in preparing and beginning the reconstruction of the Temple. Yet at that time even the very top of what remained of the Temple's erstwhile foundations could not be seen without first doing some strenuous spadework. This was implied in a statement of the great Church historian Eusebius (260 - 339), the product of Caesarea and subsequently its bishop, who was within

easy journey to that hallowed site. A passage in his *Demonstratio evangelica* recalls a visit of his there: "The area is ploughed and cultivated by Roman citizens ("viri Romani") in a way not at all different from other such fields, and we have observed with our very eyes that the area was ploughed and planted with the help of oxen." Such was the fulfillment, according to Eusebius, of the predictions made by Israel's best masters: the prophets, the priests, and the teachers.<sup>1</sup>

In 363, the bishop of Jerusalem was none other than the famed Saint Cyril. Together with him, Christians there could but see a divine punishment in the sudden reversal of Jewish fortunes in Jerusalem in January 363. First everything looked most promising for the success of the reconstruction. Enthusiasm ran high among Jews. Jewish women gave their jewels and used their garments to help carry away the earth removed by diggers busy with making room for the new foundations. Jews scorned bishop Cyril, who made a dire prediction on the eve of the day when lime was to be added to some foundation stones already in place. During the night there arose a huge storm, the earth shook, and huge balls of fire burst forth from the ground and continued to do so through the next day. Instruments melted, workers were burnt to death, strange crosses appeared on clothes and bodies, a luminous cross shone in the sky, and the enterprise had to be abandoned.

Jewish historians have always done their best to make that event a non-event indeed. All too often they simply ignored it. There is an ominous undertone in the remark in the great *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, published in Berlin in 1932, just before Hitler's rise to power, that "Jews almost entirely chose to be silent on the subject."<sup>2</sup> The silence is, of course, understandable on an emotional basis, but hardly excusable when it comes to the elementary dictates of scholarship. That silence has changed in recent decades to no less revealing efforts to cope with an obviously most inconveniencing topic. Some claim that nothing really happened in January 363, because Julian planned to reconstruct the Temple only after his return from the Persian campaign, in which he lost his life. Some others try to make it appear that the



failure was due to a huge earthquake the year following. Still others charge that major Church historians from the fifth century, led by anti-Jewish sentiments, greatly embellished something that did not really cause any excitement either to Jews or to Pagans. It is not a typical facet about Jewish attitudes toward that event that in *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Jewish History Source Book*, first published in 1935 and reprinted several times since then, the words of Sozomenes, one of those historians, who wrote before 450 or so, were reprinted,<sup>3</sup> though without any serious discussion of their merit and significance.

### *Background to some facts*

It is not to cross swords with Jewish accounts or rather non-accounts of what is available from between 363 and 450 about what happened in Jerusalem in January 363 that the record is now presented as fully as possible. The purpose is to refresh very dormant Christian memories, indeed the memories of educated Christians that should never become oblivious to outstanding facts. What prompted me to write this essay was not at all that recent issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. It was in connection with another recent writing of mine, in which A. D. 70 came up, that I asked some well-educated younger Catholic friends of mine whether they have ever read about what happened in Jerusalem in January 363. None of them said they had. Then I suddenly remembered that TIME issue with the picture of a scale model of the Temple in it. I could not help sensing an urge about writing this essay.

Needless to say, I found no reference whatsoever in that TIME report to A. D. 363, or to Julian, or to Christian Church historians, who wrote within two or three generations after the event. By 1989 TIME had for almost twenty years been in an ownership that no longer shared the views of its founder, Henry Luce and of his wife, Claire Booth Luce. Christianity, the Christian Church, and Christians have become a regular whipping boy for that influential weekly. This fact, though very telling, would not be researched in today's leading schools of journalism as a topic for a master's thesis, let alone for a doctoral dissertation on bias at

work in implementing the motto, "all the news that's fit to print," or other noble-sounding mottos.

At any rate, long before those church historians took up the subject, Gregory of Nazianze, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom recalled the event in various lengths. They were not only Christians but also venerated by Christians as Saints. As such they are, of course, suspect in the eyes of the protagonists of a "purely" objective scholarship, who are, of course, never objective enough to see the splinter in their own antidogmatically and secularly "saintly" eyes.

They, of course, are at pains to take the edge out of the fact that the event was recounted by one of Julian's friends, the pagan Ammianus Marcellinus. He was about the same age as Julian, who died at the age of 31, but Ammianus survived him by thirty some years. He certainly survived in learned memory as one of the major pagan historians of classical antiquity. Of his great "History" in thirty-one Books the first thirteen are lost. The extant Books begin with the events of 353 and are interspersed with digressions of great cultural and social interest. It is after a long digression in Book xxii about hippopotami, rhinoceri, ichnueomons, ibis, and other curiosities of ancient Egypt that Ammianus takes up history again at the very start of Book xxiii which takes us to January 363, or the beginning of Julian's second full year as the sole ruler of the Empire.

By dwelling on those strange animals and their strange ways, Ammianus did not want to provide a stark contrast to what he recalls in the first page of Book xxiii. Yet any of his readers, then or now, could but feel struck by the sudden change of perspective. It was startling to hear from Ammianus that a reigning Caesar picked a commoner to be his colleague as consul. Ammianus then he portrays Julian, who wintered in Antioch, as preparing his campaign against the Persians, while at the same time busy with all sorts of public projects. Of those projects Ammianus mentions specifically only one, the restoration "at vast cost" of the Temple in Jerusalem, which Vespasian and Titus had laid low, though only with great difficulty. The enormity of that military undertaking was still vividly remembered.

Ammianus then reports that Julian was so eager to have the Temple rebuilt with great speed that he entrusted it to Alypius, a good friend of his, who had already greatly distinguished himself as vice-prefect of Britain. Then came the lapidary lines: "But, though this Alypius pushed the work on with vigour, aided by the governor of the province [of Syria], terrifying balls of flame kept bursting forth near the foundations of the temple, and made the place inaccessible to the workmen, some of whom were burned to death; and since in this way the element [of fire] persistently repelled them, the enterprise halted."<sup>4</sup>

The statement's plainness is alone an indication on behalf of its reliability. The statement does not suggest at all that Ammianus merely summarized a longer statement of which around 390 there was certainly one, although he could be familiar with it. Had Ammianus seen that statement, he would have taken issue at least with its tone, though hardly with what it contained about the event itself. Otherwise, he would not have stated the factuality of the event with no touch of doubt.

That much longer statement is chronologically the first which is extant about Julian's effort to rebuild the Temple. The statement was prompted by panegyrics on Julian that were offered after his death by philosopher-statesmen in his entourage such as Libanius and Ammianus. In none of those panegyrics do we find reference to Julian's failed effort. No wonder. It could only be taken for Heaven's rebuttal of the one who tried to re-establish in full honor the lowly heavens of paganism of old and at the same discredit the One, whose followers he decreed to be called "Galileans."

Ammianus might have taken issue with that first and long statement, as it came from a former classmate, so to speak, of young Julian's in Athens. The classmate was none other than Gregory of Nazianzus (330 - 390). The two studied in Athens shortly before 350 or so. Thirty more years later, when Julianus' name was but a reminder of God's intervention on behalf of His own, Gregory was a stalwart of orthodox theology. It was as such that he presided at the Second Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 381.

To achieve fame as a champion of orthodoxy meant in those times a resolute defense of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. Fifty some years after the Council of Nicaea, where many thought that Arius' heresy had been dealt with once and for all, it became all too clear that heresies are like hydras. Once the head of the original heresiarch is discredited, ever new heads pop up, with ever new verbalizations of the old error. Semiarianism ruled supreme in sundry varieties, all consisting in misrepresentations about Christ as the unity of two natures in one person. The issue on hand was whether God had indeed come in a body to dwell as a true man among men. For such was the gist of the famed term *homoousion* (consubstantial) on the acceptance of which hinged the future of Christianity. Had that term not been taken for the touchstone of Christian truth, the Church would have eventually degenerated into an obscure Jewish sect, to recall a very apt remark of Harnack.

The issue was not monotheism. Arius believed in one God or at least so it appeared. But by 380, and even earlier, there were enough indications that the reality of the supernatural was truly at stake. It was all too clearly perceived that an intellectual dynamics was at play: The supernatural, as represented in the Incarnation, could not be safeguarded unless that Incarnation was properly defended. If not, a trend toward naturalism was put in motion. Julian was significant, because his apostasy from Christian faith toward pagan "monotheism" perfectly illustrated the lengths to which this trend could carry its protagonists.

Those lengths included the whole gamut of divinations in which Christians could only see the evil spirits, or fallen angels at work. These were, according to Christian belief, the chief architects of man's fall, from which only the Incarnate Son of God could rescue mankind. The apostasy, be it of an ascetic like Julian, was a vote on behalf of diabolical powers that were hiding behind divinations and the hapless belief that through the sacrificing of animals one could share in the hidden strength of an animated nature.

There is more in Julianus' offer made to the Jews to rebuild the Temple than meets the eye. He clearly saw in them future

allies for his own pantheism or nature worship, which he tried to pass off as a sort of monotheism. But his infatuation with divination and idol worship gave away the inner logic of his theology. There may not have been much depth to Julian's evaluation of the Jews as future members of his universal church of nature worship. But he was profoundly resolved to set it up, with bishops and other Christian trappings thrown in for good measure, following his return from the Persian campaign. It shows much of Julian's duplicity, that shortly after the rebuilding of the Temple had to be aborted, he scorned the Jews by telling them that the failure proved the inanity of confining God to any edifice and even to any temple's permanence.<sup>5</sup> Words of Jesus were not entirely effaced from Julian's mind. He could not yet, of course, see the extent to which cabbalistic lore was to infiltrate Jewish thought from early medieval times on, and much less the enormous percentage of pantheists among Jews in modern times. Both developments speak clearly of the inner weakness of a monotheism which does not include genuine Christology.

#### *Gregory's statement*

This is to be kept in mind in seeing the thrust of Gregory's two orations against Julian which he delivered, in late 363 or early 364, in Nazianzus, the major town near Arianze, his birthplace in Cappadocia. Both orations were the response of the rising star of Christian orthodoxy to Libanius' and Ammonius' panegyrics on Julian, who celebrated him as the one who brought forth from the human a divine which was not at all above mere human nature, and not even that Nature which is the universe.

In the first of his two orations, Gregory dealt with the chinks in Julian's character and on the inconsistencies of the "monotheism" of an apostate bent on repressing Christian faith and Christians. Even pagan admirers of Julian found it repellent that once the sole emperor, Julian forbade Christians from attending places where instruction was given in Greek philosophy and rhetoric. In the second oration Gregory dealt with God's response to Julian's playing god. A centerpiece in that response was what happened in Jerusalem in January 363, because Gregory stated

right at the outset that he was not to bog down in reciting small evidences of God's ire toward Julian for his having interfered with Christian worship. He would rather dwell on "that miracle which is on the lips of everybody, and to which credence is given even by those who think that there is no God."<sup>6</sup>

The miracle was consequent on Julian's decision "to stir the Jews more than ever against the Christians by urging them to return to their city and rebuild the Temple, and restore their ancient rites, judging from their books that this was preordained, although he couched this in references to his benevolence toward them." Then Gregory reports what is learned from those who admire the Jews: "Their women not only parted with their sumptuous dresses and ornaments, but took part in the work of laborers, indeed they carried the dirt in their lap, with no consideration for their robes and for the tenderness of their bodies, because they saw in all this a work of piety, as they carried everything downward [into the nearby valley]." Gregory then turns to the first of three miraculous events:

But a sudden whirlwind and the convulsion of the earth caused them to rush to a nearby church, some in order to pray, others, as in such cases often happens, to seek refuge, still others because they were dragged along by the rest. But I must not forget that as they reached the door of the church which was open, suddenly those doors closed, as if by an invisible hand, which fills with fear the impious and protects the devout. It is reported unanimously and held for certain, that when they tried to open the door of the church, flames that burst forth from the inside prevented them from forcing the door open. The flames then burnt some of them and destroyed others (similarly to what happened to the Sodomites and also to Nadab and Abiud, who unlawfully grabbed the incense and were devoured). Still others lost various limbs of their bodies to the flames that burst from inside the church and burnt some them to death.

Gregory adds that only those refuse to admit the miraculous character of the foregoing event "who do not believe in any miracle of God." In reference to the most astonishing part of his

recital, the sudden bursting of flames from inside the church, Gregory stated that he recalled it because it was reported "unanimously and held for certain." This should seem of great moment about the reliability of all other parts as well of his account of what happened. He was fully aware of the need of being credible when reporting about truly miraculous events.

The second and for Gregory even more miraculous part of what happened was "the appearance of a cross within a luminous circle in the sky." Had he been just an orator, Gregory might have yielded to the temptation of embellishing this with details drawn from his own or others' imagination. Instead, Gregory challenged the defunct Julian to find anything similar reported in the astrological lore so dear to him: "Where do you find such a circle in your mathematical books?" Gregory meant, of course, books on astronomy which at that time had astrology for its integral part. Ptolemy, who produced the best of those books, did not discuss halos, if indeed the cross within a circle was a much enhanced halo. Such a halo would, of course, have been most unusual, very rarely observed by modern meteorologists.

Next to the sky, the earth too joined in witness. Its convulsions were, according to Gregory, so great "as to make even more difficult any future reconstruction of the Temple." Gregory asked: "Did the air fall behind the earth and the sky, in bringing forth its own witness?" Not at all. Its witness was most terrifying:

Anyone who was there found either on his vestments or on his body a luminous sign in the form of a cross, which exceeded the beauty of anything produced by a weaver or by a painter. On seeing this, they [the Jews] were so terrified as to invoke in one voice the God of the Christians and tried to expiate Him with many praises and supplications. Some even went so far as to seek out our priests, and were after many prayers admitted into the Church, and introduced into the greater mysteries. They had their souls purified in baptism, and so profited from their terror.

Gregory's account of what happened is clearly that of a Christian orator, whose principal interest in the event relates to

the moral he can draw from it and not to a possible physical explanation of what happened in the air so as to have crosses imprinted on bodies and vestments. Yet the facts are stated by him with great emphasis and remarkable succinctness. There is no reason to think that he had invented anything or let his imagination run free. Had he done so he would have exposed himself to immediate rebuttal by pagan admirers of Julian who were very numerous indeed and were not absent even from Cappadocia, a stronghold of Christianity. But neither Gregory, nor other erstwhile reporters of the event were challenged about the veracity of their presentation. Gregory, who stood all too often in the eye of the storm of theological disputes, was never charged of falsifying or inventing facts. His character alone is an assurance in this respect.

### *Chrysostom and Ambrose*

In 370 or six years after Gregory delivered his orations against Julian, Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407), the greatest orator of all Christian times, delivered ninety homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew. In the seventy-fifth, he began with interpreting Jesus' prediction that there would remain no stone upon stone from the Temple. This prediction, John insisted, was not yet fulfilled completely in his time, because it meant not merely some desolation but a complete one. The fact that parts of the Temple's foundations were still to be destroyed, was taken by John that the prophecy was yet to be fulfilled completely. But, he added, "from what hath been done, even the most contentious ought to believe, concerning the remains, that they are to be utterly destroyed."<sup>7</sup>

If one recalls Eusebius' having seen the place as a field, John's remark may easily appear as a reference to the turning up of the Temple's foundations when its reconstruction was attempted in January 363. Seventeen years later John explicitly recalled the bursting of flames from those foundations. The occasion was the long sermon he preached at the translation of the relics of Saint Babylas, bishop of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom during Decius. The bishop's body rested in Antioch until the emperor Gallus had them translated in 351 to a church built near a temple



of Daphne in the outskirts of Antioch, a pagan sanctuary notorious for its oracles and lascivious rites. Once the relics arrived there, the oracles ceased. In order to revive the oracles, Julian in 362 ordered the relics to be removed. The Christians retranslated the relics to Antioch. Still two other translations followed, the second of them in 387 at which John preached. Obviously he had to expand on Julian's persecution of the Church, including his effort to rebuild the Temple. About the latter, John could be brief only because he could assume that in his listeners' memory the event loomed large: "No sooner had the Jews started removing the soil than fire erupting from the ground devoured them."<sup>8</sup>

That the failure of that effort was taken for an undisputed great fact obtained a telling confirmation in a letter which Saint Ambrose (339 - 397), bishop of Milan, wrote in March 380 to Emperor Gratian. It would have been the height of folly on the part of Ambrose, a great ecclesiastical figure of those times, to use as his ace card a reference to an event that did not happen or had been doubted by any. Moreover, it was in the context of a crucial confrontation with Emperor Gratian in March 380 that Ambrose brought up an event that had taken place in Jerusalem seventeen years earlier. As a former prominent civil servant, Ambrose must have realized that he would have destroyed his entire argument had he not been able to assume that for Gratian, or for anyone in the imperial administration, the event was as real as it was for Ambrose and to countless others.

Ambrose was wrong in flatly telling the Emperor that "the maintenance of civil law should be secondary to religion." A clear understanding of the distinction between the religious and the civil order of things was still far ahead in the future. Ambrose was even more mistaken in thinking that were the bishop of Thessalonica to carry out the Emperor's order and rebuild the synagogue which Christians at the bishop's instigation had burned down, the bishop would be guilty of a heinous sacrilege. "Have you not heard how," Ambrose asked the Emperor, "when Julian had ordered the Temple of Jerusalem rebuilt, those who were clearing the rubbish were burned by fire from heaven? Are

you not afraid that this will happen also now? In fact, you should never have given an order such as Julian would have given."<sup>9</sup>

### *Minor Church historians*

Whatever else that long letter of Ambrose demonstrates, it certainly shows that no one of any count at that time seemed to doubt the miraculous rebuttal of Julian's effort to rebuild the Temple. Indeed, when there appeared ten years later the first account of the event in the context of a history of the Church, the report could not have been more sober and factual. The historian was Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345 - 410), best remembered for his controversial championing of Origen in the West. Rufinus was not beyond giving too favorable or incorrect translations of Origen's statements for which he earned the ire of Jerome, who in turn was chastized by Augustine for having been worse than intemperate. But Rufinus was not the target of similar attacks as the author of "Historia ecclesiastica," written around 400. What he states there about our subject is important because he is the earliest source about an intriguing detail. Cyril, by 363 for a dozen or so years bishop of Jerusalem and the author of the famed *Catecheses mystagogicae*, preached around 349, made a dire warning about the outcome. The detail, however telling, is but a part in Rufinus' lengthy account:

So great was Julian's subtlety and shrewdness as to land even the unfortunate Jews in illusory expectations to which he himself was subject. He summoned them and confronted them with the question of why they do not perform sacrifices, although their laws obligate them to do so. But they, sensing the opportunity of the moment, said: 'We can do so only in the Temple of Jerusalem. For such is the command of the Law'. Having obtained from him the permission to start with the work of reconstruction, they became so emboldened in their insolence as to make it appear that a prophet of theirs had come to them. From all regions and provinces there came Jews, to start with the reconstruction of the Temple which had long ago been consumed by fire. With the permission of the Emperor's representative, they used public and private means to proceed in great haste. Meanwhile they started insulting our fellow Christians, as

if the Jews' old kingdom were to be reinstated. As the Jews grew in confidence and pride, they menaced Christians ever more heatedly. At that time Cyril, the successor of Maximus, was the bishop of Jerusalem. After the foundations had been laid bare, and cement and lime were piled up, nothing prevented that next day, with the old foundations having been removed, they would start with laying the foundations anew. But after careful consideration of what he had read in their prophet Daniel about the times to come and in our Lord's prediction in the Gospels, he insisted that in no way was it possible that the Jews would lay stone upon stone right there. There was a great suspense.

Lo and behold,—Rufinus continues,—during the night immediately preceding the work of laying the foundations, there was a huge earthquake. Not only the stones of the foundations were thrown far and wide, but almost all the nearby edifices were laid low. Some public colonnades, in which a multitude of Jews, ready to start work, gathered, collapsed to the ground and buried all the Jews there. With the coming of daylight, as they hoped to escape the danger, other Jews gathered to rescue those buried under the ruins of the colonnade.

There was an edifice, with an entrance between two porticos, in the lower parts of the Temple grounds, in which tools and other instruments were stored. From that edifice suddenly, a ball of fire erupted and rushed forth through the middle of the precincts, and dashed back and forth among the burned and dead Jews. The ball of fire repeated this again and again, and very frequently, during the rest of the day, thus punishing with its vengeful flames the boldness of a contumacious people. Meanwhile their enormous fright forced all those present to be prompted to confess our sole Lord Jesus Christ. And in order that no one should take this for a fortuitous occurrence, during the next night the sign of the cross appeared so visibly on the garment of everybody that even those who in their unbelief tried to wash it away, could not succeed in erasing it. Thus terrified, the Jews and the Gentiles abandoned the place as well as the enterprise they had just begun.<sup>10</sup>

The Western or Latin parts of the Empire provided within a few years another historian of greater promise than Rufinus. Unfortunately, Paulus Orosius, the historian in question, disappeared from history after 418, at the age 28. By then he had just

completed a task which Augustine himself assigned to him: to provide evidence that the pagan centuries were fraught with more and greater calamities than were the centuries since the birth of Christ and especially the last hundred years. In his *Seven Books of History against the Pagans* Orosius performed his task so well as to prompt Dante to call him "the advocate of the Christian centuries."<sup>11</sup> Three centuries later, Bossuet took Orosius for a guide as he wrote his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*. Orosius, whose style is still greatly admired, and to whom we owe the word "Romania" standing for the Romans' cultural bequest as amplified by Christianity, was original only for the years 377 - 417. Strangely, he did not report Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple, but spoke of Julian's command that an amphitheater be built in Jerusalem. Julian wanted a place in the Galilean's land where "on his return from the Parthians, he might offer the bishops, monks and all the saints of the locality to beasts deliberately made more ferocious so that he might view them being torn apart."<sup>12</sup> Orosius, who wrote at the behest of Augustine, perhaps followed his master, who remained equally silent on Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple, although on occasion he referred to Julian's persecution of Christians.

The next testimony is from the East and from the pen of an Arian, Philostorgius (c. 368 - 425 or 433). He undertook the task of taking up ecclesiastical history from 325 on where Eusebius terminated his narrative. As one who lived in Constantinople much of his life, he had access to plenty of source material. Of Philostorgius' work we have only many excerpts, made by Photius (820 - 891) and others. Photius, of course, took exception to Philostorgius' endorsements of the views of various Arians, but never to his presentation of facts. According to Philostorgius,

Julian the Apostate by undertaking in vain the reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, by being convinced about the falsity of Our Lord's prediction that no stone upon stone would remain in Jerusalem, not only failed to achieve anything of his undertaking but also proved true, though unwittingly, the certainty of that prediction. After having summoned all the Jews from all around and given them money from the treasury and

provided them with other subsidies, he commanded them to reconstruct the Temple. But various, divinely sent terrors, which no clever eloquence can explain away, not only stopped their determination, but covered with shame both the Emperor and the Jews, who were left utterly perplexed. First, fire consumed those who dared to start working. Then earthquake erupted, still others were finished off by other calamities. Thus the audacity that held in contempt our Lord's prophecies was rebutted by the imprudent [Julian] and their unshakable and venerable veracity was brought forth.<sup>13</sup>

### *Major Church historians*

With this we chronologically arrive at the two best known testimonies, both of which come from professional historians, such as Socrates (c. 380 - c. 450) and Sozomen (c. 400 - c. 450). Of these the former was by far the superior. Sozomen, as will be seen, clearly depended on what he found in Socrates' "Ecclesiastical History," a work composed, as was also the case with Sozomen's history, in Constantinople and during much the same years (440 - 450). Socrates' account is found in Book V of his work where the entire chapter xxii is devoted to the event:

Though the emperor hated and oppressed the Christians, he manifested benevolence and humanity towards the Jews. He wrote to the Jewish patriarchs and leaders, as well as to the people, requesting them to pray for him, and for the prosperity of the empire. In taking this step he was not actuated, I am convinced, by any respect for their religion; for he was aware that it is, so to speak, the mother of the Christian religion, and he knew that both religions rest upon the authority of the patriarchs and the prophets; but he thought to grieve the Christians by favoring the Jews, who are their most inveterate enemies. But perhaps he also calculated upon persuading the Jews to embrace paganism and sacrifices; for they were only acquainted with the mere letter of Scripture, and could not, like the Christians and a few of the wisest among the Hebrews, discern the hidden meaning.

Events proved that this was his real motive; for he sent for some of the chiefs of the [Jewish] race and exhorted them to return to the observance of the laws of Moses and the customs of their fathers. On their

replying that because the temple in Jerusalem was overturned, it was neither lawful nor ancestral to do this in another place than the metropolis out of which they had been cast, he gave them public money, commanded them to rebuild the temple and to practice the cult similar to that of their ancestors by sacrificing after the ancient way. The Jews entered upon the undertaking, without reflecting that, according to the prediction of the holy prophets, it could not be accomplished. They sought for the most skillful artisans, collected materials, cleared the ground, and entered so earnestly upon the task, that even the women carried heaps of earth, and brought their necklaces and other female ornaments towards defraying the expense.

The emperor, the other pagans, and all the Jews, regarded every other undertaking as secondary in importance to this. Although the pagans were not well-disposed towards the Jews, yet they assisted them in this enterprise, because they reckoned upon its ultimate success, and hoped by this means to falsify the prophecies of Christ. Besides this motive, the Jews themselves were impelled by the consideration that the time had arrived for rebuilding their temple. When they had removed the ruins of the former building, they dug up the ground and cleared away its foundation, a great earthquake occurred, and by the violent agitation of the earth, stones were thrown up from the depths, by which those of the Jews who were engaged in the work were wounded, as likewise those who were merely looking on. The houses and public porticos, near the site of the temple, in which they had diverted themselves, were suddenly thrown down; many were caught thereby, some perished immediately, others were found half dead and mutilated of hands or legs, others were injured in other parts of the body. When God caused the earthquake to cease, the workmen who survived again returned to their task, partly because such was the edict of the emperor, and partly because they were themselves interested in the undertaking. Men often, in endeavoring to gratify their own passions, seek what is injurious to them, reject what would be truly advantageous, and are deluded by the ideas that nothing is really useful except what is agreeable to them. When once led astray by this error, they are no longer able to act in a manner conducive to their own interests, or to take warning by the calamities which are visited upon them.

The Jews, I believe, were just in this state; for, instead of regarding this unexpected earthquake as a manifest indication that God was opposed to the re-erection of their temple, they proceeded to recommence the work. But all parties relate, that they had scarcely returned to the undertaking when fire burst suddenly from the foundations of the temple, and consumed several of the workmen.

This fact is fearlessly stated, and believed by all; the only discrepancy in the narrative is that some maintain that flame burst from the interior of the temple, as the workmen were striving to force an entrance, while others say that the fire proceeded directly from the earth. In whichever way the phenomenon might have occurred, it is equally wonderful. A more tangible and still more extraordinary prodigy ensued; suddenly the sign of the cross appeared spontaneously on the garments of the persons engaged in the undertaking. These crosses were disposed like stars, and appeared the work of art. Many were hence led to confess that Christ is God, and that the rebuilding of the temple was not pleasing to Him; others presented themselves in the church, were initiated, and besought Christ, with hymns and supplications, to pardon their transgression. If any one does not feel disposed to believe my narrative, let him go and be convinced by those who heard the facts that I have related from the eyewitnesses of them, for they are still alive. Let him inquire, also, of the Jews and pagans who left the work in an incomplete state, or who, to speak more accurately, were able to commence it.<sup>14</sup>

As a good historian, Socrates had an eye open for discrepancies in the various reports, but he found only one. Very important should seem his assertion that he gained his information from eyewitnesses. Some of these had to be very old by the time Socrates actually wrote his work, but he most likely began collecting his material much earlier, say, when he was a young man, when some of the eyewitnesses were still in their fifties or sixties. The fact that Sozomen, twenty years Socrates' junior, did not claim to have heard the story from eyewitnesses is a telling indication of his trustworthiness. According to Sozomen:

The emperor in another attempt to molest the Christians exposed his superstition. Being fond of sacrificing, he not only himself delighted in the

blood of victims, but considered it an indignity offered to him, if others did not do likewise. And as he found but few persons of this stamp, he sent for the Jews and enquired of them why they abstained from sacrificing, since the law of Moses enjoined it? On their replying that it was not permitted them to do this in any other place than Jerusalem, he immediately ordered them to rebuild Solomon's temple. Meanwhile he himself proceeded on his expedition against the Persians. The Jews who had been long desirous of obtaining a favorable opportunity for rearing their temple afresh in order that they might therein offer sacrifice, applied themselves very vigorously to the work. Moreover, they conducted themselves with great insolence toward the Christians, and threatened to do them as much mischief, as they had themselves suffered from the Romans. The emperor having ordered that the expenses of this structure should be defrayed out of the public treasury, all things were soon provided, such as timber and stone, burnt brick, clay, lime, and all other materials necessary for building. On this occasion Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, called to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which Christ also in the holy gospels has confirmed, and predicted in the presence of many persons that the time had indeed come "in which one stone should not be left upon another in that temple," but that the Saviour's prophetic declaration should have its full accomplishment.

Such were the bishop's words: and on the night following, a mighty earthquake tore up the stones of the old foundations of the temple and dispersed them all together with the adjacent edifices. Terror consequently possessed the Jews on account of the event; and the report of it brought many to the spot who resided at a great distance: when therefore a vast multitude was assembled, another prodigy took place. Fire came down from heaven and consumed all the builders' tools: so that the flames were seen preying upon mallets, irons to smooth and polish stones, saws, hatchets, adzes, in short all the various implements which the workmen had procured as necessary for the undertaking; and the fire continued burning among these for a whole day. The Jews indeed were in the greatest possible alarm, and unwillingly confessed Christ calling him God: yet they did not do his will; but influenced by inveterate prepossessions they still clung to Judaism. Even a third miracle which afterwards happened failed to lead them to a belief of the truth. For the next night luminous impressions of a cross appeared imprinted on their



garments, which at daybreak they in vain attempted to rub or wash out. They were therefore "blinded" as the apostle says, and cast away the good which they had in their hands: and thus was the temple, instead of being rebuilt, at that time wholly overthrown.<sup>15</sup>

The detail, that according to Sozomen the fire came from heaven, may simply mean that it owed its origin to a supernatural or heavenly agency. This perspective is clearly present in the next document that was written about a decade or two after the works of Socrates and Sozomen began to circulate. The document, the "Ecclesiastical History" of Saint Theodoret of Cyr (c. 393 - 466), the bishop of a small town near Antioch and a most noble character in all evidence, contains the following:

Julian, who had made his soul a home of destroying demons, went his corybantic way, ever raging against true religion. He accordingly now armed the Jews too against the believers in Christ. He began by enquiring of some whom he got together why, though their law imposed on them the duty of sacrifices, they offered none. On their reply that their worship was limited to one particular spot, this enemy of God immediately gave directions for the re-erection of the destroyed temples, supposing in his vanity that he could falsify the prediction of the Lord, of which, in reality, he exhibited the truth.

The Jews heard his words with delight and made known his orders to their countrymen throughout the world. They came with haste from all directions, contributing alike money and enthusiasm for the work; and the emperor made all the provisions he could, less from the pride of munificence than from hostility to the truth. He despatched also as governor a fit man to carry out his impious orders. It is said that they made mattocks, shovels, and baskets of silver. When they had begun to dig and to carry out the earth a vast multitude of them went on with the work all day, but by night the earth which had been carried away shifted back from the ravine of its own accord. They destroyed moreover the remains of the former construction, with the intention of building everything up afresh; but when they had got together thousands of bushels of chalk and lime, of a sudden a violent gale blew, and storms, tempests and whirlwinds scattered everything far and wide.

They still went on in their madness, nor were they brought to their senses by the divine long-suffering. Then first came a great earthquake, fit to strike terror into the hearts of men quite ignorant of God's dealings; and, when still they were not awed, fire running from the excavated foundations burnt up most of the diggers, and put the rest to flight. Moreover when a large number of men were sleeping at night in an adjacent building it suddenly fell down, roof and all, and crushed the whole of them. On that night and also on the following night the sign of the cross of salvation was seen brightly shining in the sky, and the very garments of the Jews were filled with crosses, not bright but black. When God's enemies saw these things, in terror at the heaven-sent plagues they fled, and made their way home, confessing the Godhead of Him who had been crucified by their fathers. Julian heard of these events, for they were repeated by everyone. But like Pharaoh he hardened his heart.<sup>16</sup>

Nothing original was added by two historians, one in the West the other in the East. The former was Cassiodorus (485 - 580) who made Vivarium, his villa in Calabria, famous as the first monastic establishment explicitly dedicated to intellectual work as distinct from manual labor. His "Historia ecclesiastica tripartita" is so named because in it he gives a compendium of the works of three major church historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyr. It is the latter whom Cassiodorus mainly follows in reporting about Julian's effort.<sup>17</sup>

Two hundred years later Saint Theophanes the Confessor produced, between 810 and 814, a summary of Church history, usually referred to as "Chronographia," in which Julian's effort is dealt with in a few phrases. While Theophanes seems to apply a scheme, he nowhere yields to dramatization, even though his "twenty thousand bushels" may seem an arbitrary addition to Theodoret's thousands of bushels:

Julian, a man of cursed memory and one bent on effacing all knowledge of God, ordered the rebuilding of the Jews' temple and put Alypius, a pagan most hostile to Christ, in charge of the enterprise. But when Alypius made the foundations, covered with soil, appear, a terribly strong wind erupted through the gaping cavity and dissipated the twenty

thousand bushels of lime piled up there. As to the Jews, who insisted on starting with the work, they were consumed by fire that erupted from the same depths. On seeing this, those in charge abandoned the enterprise.<sup>18</sup>

### *Modern Times*

This is not the place to instance references to our event in medieval chronicles.<sup>19</sup> It is best to resume our narrative with the last of a major articulation of medieval perspective on history, Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681), written in a perspective first articulated in Augustine's *City of God*, for whom and all his emulators history was written by Providence. About Julian's attempt Bossuet writes, of course, as one conscious of his role as the history instructor of the Dauphin, still in his teens. Bossuet therefore could not go into documentation. He merely states that Christian authors reported "with one accord" of Julian's failure to reconstruct the Temple, but "the thing had to be vouched by the heathens themselves." Then he quoted Ammianus' lapidary statement reproduced above.<sup>20</sup>

The enormously learned volumes of Baronius' *Annales*, first published between 1598 and 1607, were not meant to serve any other perspective, which, in view of its massive documentation, could only be resented by bad faith. The 12 folio volumes of the *Annales* served for decades to come as a primary source of information on Church history. Baronius devoted to our event four folio pages in which, as befits a sound historian, he gave prominent place to the first report, or Gregory's second oration against Julian. A hundred years later, Baronius' work was replaced as a primary reference for the first six centuries by Tillemont's (Louis Sébastien Le Nain) *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles* that first appeared between 1693-1712 in 16 volumes. Tillemont's account of the event is part of his long essay on Julian, and, like all his other essays, is even today unsurpassed in its vast array of meticulous references to anything he takes from his sources.<sup>21</sup>

None other than Gibbon was to praise Tillemont's "inimitable exactitude," which, so Gibbon stated, let him through the intricacy-

cies of later Roman history, with the sure-footed sagacity of "an Alpine mule." As one who was more of an orator than a historian, Gibbon certainly needed much help in obtaining facts, and readily at that, in order to bring to completion between 1772 and 1787 his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It was a work of six large volumes bursting with facts, though always carefully stacked whenever this was required by Gibbon's stance as an ideologue. Those able to distinguish between Gibbon's ability to excel as a stylist and his resolve to weigh and slight facts as he sees this fit for his real purpose, would easily see through Gibbon's reporting on what happened in January 363. To his credit, he does not hide in that very crucial context that he is not so much a historian as a *philosophe* for whom miracles cannot exist. He therefore makes it appear, a task hardly difficult for a master of style, that some of the details did not happen at all, whereas others happened only later, and that many details are the product of "Christian" imagination and miracle mongering.<sup>22</sup> Gibbon's presenting himself as a *philosophe* certainly fits the time of his writing and publishing his magnum opus, which has since seen innumerable editions down to our times. It is still a big gun in the hands of those who, like Julian, try to restore ancient paganism minus its animal sacrifices and haruspician arts, although they in vain try to stem the newly rising tide of astrology. Once more sheer rationalism is not an effective barrier against the inroads of irrational proclivities, especially when the real barrier, Christianity finds itself badly divided.

Our subject provides a telling instance of that division even within those who were largely responsible for bringing about a "divided Christendom." They incurred this guilt by not heeding Augustine's peremptory declaration aimed at the Donatists: "There can be no just cause for rending the unity of the Church."<sup>23</sup> The penalty for perpetrating such a crime is manifold. One is the breaking up into countless fragments of the camp that wanted to restore the true Church, unblemished by Romanist deviations. The other is even more serious. It consists in denying that miracles have occurred after the last of the Apostles had passed away. Clearly, if there were miracles even in the early Church, let alone

in later centuries (and there were plenty of them), the claim that the Church is to be thoroughly reformed may sound rather dubious. Are not miracles the most palpable evidence of the actual presence of the supernatural?

This is to be kept in mind if one is to see the true bearing of a book, still the only notable among books that were published on Julian's failure. The book, *Julian*, was, according to its subtitle, "a Discourse concerning the Earthquake and Fiery Eruption, which defeated that Emperor's attempt to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem: in which the reality of a divine interposition is shewn; the objections to it are answered, and the nature of that evidence, which demands the assent of every reasonable man to a miraculous fact, is considered and explained." The book first appeared in 1750, and was immediately reprinted the following year. The book had for its author none other than William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester and a prominent defender of the faith as an Anglican saw it around that time, and saw it also in support of strong Establishment times. Against the rationalists, whose numbers were growing by leaps and bounds within a society that was Christian more and more only in a nominal sense, the reality of miracles had to be defended.

A delicate task for an Anglican who as a bishop could not appear a rank Protestant for whom there could be neither bishops nor priests. Miracles that happened in the early Christian Church could not simply be written off without producing thereby a boomerang against an ecclesiological position in which the Church of England was one of the three main branches of the true Church. But to satisfy Protestant strains within Anglicanism, it was best to defend at least those miracles that did not take place through the instrumentality of a bishop, a priest, let alone a martyr's relics.

All this is to be recalled for a proper appraisal of the fact that the second half of Warburton's more than 200-page-long book is a diatribe against the book of a well-known French Calvinist minister, Jacques Basnage de Beauval, who in his *Histoire des Juifs* (1707) rejected much of what happened in Jerusalem in 363.<sup>24</sup> In the first part of his book, Warburton quoted at great length many

of the documents already given here, though with a prolixity of comments that could but undercut their demonstrative value. The really interesting part of Warburton's book relates to his reporting two fairly recent attestations of the appearance of crosses on vestments. One took place in 1610 near the residence of the bishop of Ely, the other was connected with the eruption of Vesuvius in 1660 and reported by the famous Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher from whom it passed into one of the writings of the equally famous Robert.<sup>25</sup> Warburton rightly saw in both reports a good reason to assume that the similar occurrence of crosses in 363 could be a natural event. What could not be natural in Warburton's view was the coincidence of earthquake, balls of fire, a huge wind, and the appearance of a cross in the sky, be it a mere halo, with the very start of the reconstruction of the Temple.

Needless to say, atmospheric physics was not in a state in Warburton's time as to permit even to an expert in it to argue convincingly the natural status of those crosses. Although Warburton spoke at great length of the effects of phosphorus, he said not a word about electricity. No wonder. Benjamin Franklin was yet to fly a kite into a thunderclap and prove thereby a thing or two about electric charges and the danger of playing with them. But the science of electricity did not even start until Coulomb performed some basic experiments in 1786.

Warburton's essay is also important because it is the basis for a chapter in Newman's *Two Essays on Miracles* (1836). There, after summing up the reports by Socrates, Sozomen, and others, Newman declares: "There is no reason to doubt any part of this narrative."<sup>26</sup> Newman's firm endorsement of the veracity of those reports, will surprise only those who ignore that already as an Anglican, Newman was a firm believer in miracles, biblical and ecclesiastical, and this is why, among other things, he gave up Anglicanism. His fondness for miracles, that only increased during his Catholic period,<sup>27</sup> certainly belies his portrait drawn by his liberal and secularist admirers, who see in him an "imperial intellect," though hardly one who included within his domain miracles as well and with no apologies to Humeans, strong or weak.

Newman was ready to admit that very natural indeed could be the factors that produced the various "miraculous" phenomena. But he insisted on the strictly miraculous character of their simultaneity with the onset of the reconstruction of the Temple. He also made much of the salutary effect of what was witnessed, which for him was an integral part of a miraculous event. Finally, he raised points that strike today with an eery timeliness:

And did we see at this day [1836] a great attempt made to reinstate the Jews as Jews in their own land, to build their Temple, and recommence their sacrifices, did the enemies of the Catholic Church forward it, did heretical bodies and their officials on the spot take part in it, and did some catastrophe, as sudden and unexpected as the fiery eruption, befall the attempt, I conceive, whatever became of abstract definitions, we should feel it to be a Divine interference, bringing with it its own evidence and needing no interpretation.<sup>28</sup>

It is indeed difficult to understand why the old *Catholic Encyclopedia*, published between 1911 and 1919 in twenty volumes, none of which betrays diffidence in miracles, should contain only two lines on Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple.<sup>29</sup> That there is not a single word about it in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* issued in the late 1960s, should speak louder than words about some "enlightened" agenda running through that great enterprise.<sup>30</sup> The omission is all the more glaring as by then Giuseppe Ricciotti's *Julian the Apostate*, first published in Italian, had already appeared in excellent English translation.<sup>31</sup> The work should have appeared important even for its being the only monograph written in modern times by a Catholic savant on that tragic emperor. Far more importantly, Ricciotti had a marvelous ability to expose non-sequiturs couched in vast displays of exegetical and biblical scholarship. His presentation in his *The Life of Christ* of the coherence of the events tied in the four Gospels to Easter day is still to be matched for clarity and conciseness.<sup>32</sup>

The same may be said of the pages Ricciotti offers in his *Julian the Apostate* about what happened in Jerusalem in January 363. Let us merely recall his reference to efforts that tried to

explain the appearance of balls of fire as the result of a volcanic explosion that carried patches of tar from the bottom of the Dead Sea to under the site of the Temple. As Ricciotti observes, the distance between those two points is about thirty miles, whereas the difference in elevation is almost a mile. The fact that on occasion patches of tar appear to float in the Dead Sea does not entitle a scholar to see in them the ready explanation of balls of fire erupting in the Temple ground. One may add to this the strange fact that the shaking of the earth appeared to be restricted to a small area indeed.

Scholarly honesty about what happened in Jerusalem in 363 is still to erupt in Jewish academic circles. Otherwise other and much more destructive eruptions may be fomented, however unwittingly, to get around the evidence with a sleight of hand. Such is the claim, offered without documentation, that scholars nowadays no longer take the reports here surveyed seriously. Another is the all too easy strategy to refer to the antisemitism of the Church Fathers, in the belief that this is enough of an argument. In one way or another two major Jewish encyclopedias display this cavalier approach.<sup>33</sup>

### *Not to Try?*

None of this is to be taken for an advice to Jewish scholars, let alone to Jews with no such qualification, that they might do best not to try to reconstruct the Temple. Jews, of course, can never ponder enough the advice which Jeremiah gave to two kings of Judah. One was Josiah, who, instead of listening to Jeremiah, followed false prophets of national aggrandizement, took a fateful military stance against Pharaoh Necho and perished on the battlefield of Meggido. Less than twenty years later, Jeremiah urged on king Jehoiachin an accommodation with Nabuchadnessar. The king's refusal to listen to God's true prophet resulted in the destruction of the Temple. In another century or two no prophet was heard any more. Mere human wisdom urged the Jews to come to terms with the Romans in A. D. 70. Owing to the dominance of firebrands, the sane voice of the Peace Party could not be heard in a Jerusalem that was soon to face rank starvation



and destruction which engulfed even the Temple, although Titus did his best to save it.

All this should be food for thought for triumphalists, Jew or Christian. The triumph of the latter, no matter how obviously a triumph, cannot be a triumph which is of this world. Still, in order to live with that unabashedly otherworldly perspective, Christians must keep in mind some outstanding facts of the history of the Church in this world. One of these facts is what happened in Jerusalem in January 363. It was but one aspect of a very broad and sinister threat which Julian posed to a Church that only two generations earlier had emerged from a long chain of persecutions.

The foregoing pages were written for the purpose of reactivating the memory of older Catholics and for the further purpose of planting some data in the memory of the younger, many of whom are unaware of what happened there and then. With those data in mind, they would have a safe standard when exposed to ever fresh reports which in the guise of evenhandedness preclude the question: To rebuild or not to try? This question the secular press, all too often unabashedly obsequious to some Jewish viewpoints, will present with a systematic dissimulation of some very pertinent points. Is it indeed true, that merely the freedom of religious expression is implied in the plans and efforts to rebuild the Temple? Was it not claimed in that *Sunday Magazine* that the restoration of the State of Israel forced the Catholic Church to reconsider its position?<sup>34</sup> Was not this a veiled hint that an eventual rebuilding of the Temple would fatally embarrass the Catholic Church? But did the Church ever teach as a point of faith that a political Jewish state cannot be reconstructed? Was it ever taught by the Church that the faithful must believe the impossibility of reconstructing the Temple? Still it may be wise to take the view according to which even mere human wisdom would suggest that it may be very wise not to try.

At any rate, a Christian should be keenly aware of the perennial wisdom which Nicodemus offered to the Sanhedrin when, after the first Pentecost, loyalty to Jesus of Nazareth began to spread among Jews as if a prairie fire had been triggered. If the

whole process, so Nicodemus said, is human in its origin, it would destroy itself. If, however, it comes from God, one would fight God in opposing it (Acts 5:39).

Unfortunately, there is no reconciliation between two views: According to one, the Messiah has already come; according to the other, He has not arrived yet. That the Messiah had indeed come was the central point in Peter's discourses reported in the Acts of the Apostles, in Paul's letters, in all the four Gospels, and in a most formal way in the Letter to the Hebrews. The latter document is all the more telling, because it clearly had to be written before the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70.

A Christian is not at liberty to gloss over the fact that the curtain of the Temple was rent when Jesus died on the cross and therefore there remained no need to sacrifice another lamb year after year. In some thirty more years, the last of such lambs was sacrificed. No ecumenism, no cultivation of Judeo-Christian amities can get around all this which no Christian can ignore as he ponders the merits of the alternative, posed with increasing frequency, in terms of the question: To rebuild or not to try?

1. Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, lib. viii. PG 22: 635.
2. Berlin: Verlag Eschkol, 1932, vol. 9, col. 602.
3. By Jacob R. Marcus (Cincinnati: The Sinai Press, 1938), pp. 9-12.
4. *Ammianus Marcellinus* with an English translation by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA.: Loeb Classical Library, 1938), vol. II, p. 311 (Book xxiii, 1).
5. This and other details about Julian are most readably given in G. Ricciotti, *Julian the Apostate*, tr. M. J. Costelloe (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960). Paul Allard's three-volume *Julien l' Apostat* (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1903) is still the standard work on Julian in spite of its being almost a hundred years old. On our topic see, especially chapter IV in volume 3. It should be noted that instead of giving long quotations from the original sources, Allard tries to build a composite picture from the data given there.
6. This and subsequent quotations are my translation from the text, in Greek and Latin, in Migne PG 35:663-719.
7. From the English translation of the Homilies on Saint Matthew, in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. X, p. 450.
8. In Sanctum Babylam contra Julianum et Gentiles, PG 50:568.
9. *Saint Ambrose. Letters*, tr. M. M. Beyenka (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), p. 11.
10. Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, lib. I, cap. xxxvii-xxxix, PL 21: 505-06.
11. *Paradiso*, 10, 119.
12. Paulus Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, tr. R. J. Ferrari (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), p. 335.
13. Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, n. 10, PG 65:546-547.
14. See full translation in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. II, pp. 89-90.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 343-44.
16. *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 103-104.
17. Cassiodorus, *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, PL 70:1058-59.
18. See text in PG 108:163-64.
19. These are often compilations and therefore can show startling lacunae and inaccuracies. Yet there is something positively intriguing in the fact that in the late-13th century *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus, a monophysite patriarch in the larger Antioch area, the three hundred or so words on Julian contain no reference to his failure to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem, although it is mentioned that he tried to please the Jews. See English translation by E. A. W. Budge (Oxford: University Press, 1932), pp. 61-62.
20. See translation by O. Ranum, *Discourse on Universal History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 228.
21. I have used the Bruxelles edition (1715), vol. XX, pp. 718-23.
22. See text in two volumes in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 40, pp. 354-55.
23. *Contra epistolam Parmeniani*, 2:11, PL 43:69.
24. Basnage' book appeared in English translation in London in 1710.
25. Warburton, *Julian*, pp. 122-127.
26. *Two Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), p. 335.
27. See my essay, "Newman and Miracles" (1995), reprinted as "Miracles" in my *Newman's Challenge* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 43-66.
28. Newman, *Two Essays*, p. 346.
29. See article, "Julian the Apostate," vol. 8, p. 559.
30. See article, "Julian the Apostate," vol. 8, p. 47.
31. Ricciotti, *Julian the Apostate*, pp. 223-28.
32. Tr. A. I. Zizzamia (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1944), pp. 650-56.
33. They are *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1904), vol. 7, p. 390; and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), vol. 10, col. 469.
34. *The New York Times Magazine*, October 3, 1999, p. 42.